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HERSETH OPPOSES WEAKENING OF HOUSE ETHICAL STANDARDS

January 5, 2005, Washington, D.C. - Last night, Rep. Stephanie Herseth opposed a bill to weaken the House's ethical standards as part of a new set of rules to govern debate for the upcoming legislative session.

Under current rules, in place since 1997, a properly filed complaint that has not been addressed by the Chair and Ranking Member, or by the Committee itself, automatically goes to an investigative subcommittee. The rules proposed for the 109th Congress provide that no action be taken on a properly filed ethics complaint if 45 days have passed unless the committee votes by majority vote to take action. Because the Ethics Committee is evenly split among Democrats and Republicans, this provision would make it extremely difficult to investigate complaints, and enable either party to guarantee a deadlock.

Rep. Herseth said, "Members of Congress should be held to the highest ethical standards, and these proposed rules weaken the Ethics Committee's ability to enforce these high standards. I oppose these provisions because the voters who elected us deserve better, and it's a shame that some in Congress are unwilling to set a high bar."

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